Once Upon a Time

THE EXHIBITION 'ONCE UPON A TIME' is divided into four sections which deal with different types of children's literature and different ways of illustrating children's books. This accompanying book follows the sections in the exhibition and contains reproductions of some of the original drawings, sketches and prints included in the exhibition. In addition, it includes brief references to the history of children's book illustration and pieces of verse and prose written in the manner of a number of famous children's stories and rhymes which, it is hoped, will encourage readers to look again at the originals they attempt to imitate. Both the exhibition and the book are designed to encourage an appreciation of the talents of the artists who illustrate children's books whose work has contributed so greatly to the success and popularity of so many classics of children's literature.

ONCE UPON A TIME

ILLUSTRATIONS FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

NATIONAL GALLERY OF SCOTLAND 1992

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on title page
Illustration by E. H. Shephard for *Winnie-the-Pooh* by A. A. Milne
Methuen 1926
below
'Young Night Thought' by Joan Hassall
from *A Child's Garden of Verses* by R. L. Stevenson
Hopetoun Press 1946

ONCE UPON A TIME

Not so long ago
There was no such thing as TV,
No films, no video.

When work or school were over,
When children's chores were done,
What did they do for amusement?
What did they do for fun?

The fortunate among them
Who'd learned to read, might look,
For pleasure or enjoyment,
At the stories in a book.

And books with illustrations
Are greater fun, and might
Have been more use to children
Who could neither read nor write.

Words by Beatrix Potter,
Words by Edward Lear,
Words by R. L. Stevenson,
The illustrations here –

Were drawn, some by the authors
And some by other hands,
Tales of buried treasure
And of wondrous far-off lands.

Start with Mr Caldecott
Or maybe Mr Crane
Don't worry if you miss one out
You can always start again.

Illustration by Walter Crane
for *Sing a Song of Sixpence*, Routledge 1867
Trustees of the British Museum

· ONE ·

SING a song of sixpence
A room full of frames —
Who are all these characters
And what are all their names?

Here's a court jester,
On whom the King relies
To find and catch the blackbirds
To bake into his pies.

There's a black and white cow
With a tail that twists and turns,
She's from *The House that Jack Built*,
Drawn by Robert Burns.

Mr Frog, whose opera hat
Has fallen on the floor,
Looks over at his friend Miss Mouse
In her lace and pinafore.

The pictures in this section
Were drawn at various times
To go with other stories
Or earlier nursery rhymes.

1: NURSERY RHYMES

Traditional stories, songs and rhymes were enjoyed by adults and children alike for centuries before they were written down. Some of these are the fairy tales and nursery rhymes that we now find in children's books.

Most nursery rhymes, like fairy tales, began as entertainment for adults. Some rhymes were fragments of ballads, or started out as political satire, riddles or proverbs, but their original meanings have usually been forgotten.

Folk tales and songs first appeared as illustrated books about three hundred years ago. The most popular ones were cheaply produced little booklets called chapbooks which contained shortened versions of fairy tales like *Cinderella* and folk songs like *A Frog he Would A-wooing Go.*

The term 'nursery rhyme' was first used in print in the 1820s; until then traditional rhymes had been known as 'pretty stories' or 'pretty songs'. The earliest surviving book of rhymes for children called *Tommy Thumb's Pretty Song Book* was published in the middle of the eighteenth century and included a version of *Sing a Song of Sixpence.* It was, as its name suggests, tiny in size, and at the top of nearly every page there was a rhyme with a small black or red engraving by an unknown artist.

From the middle of the nineteenth century, children's book illustrators were no longer anonymous, and artists like Walter Crane, Randolph Caldecott and Kate Greenaway became famous for their picture books of nursery rhymes and tales.

'This is the cow with the crumpled horn' by Robert Burns for *This is the House that Jack Built*, Moray Press 1937

Forrest McKay Gallery

'Playtime' by Kate Greenaway
for *A Day in a Child's Life*, Routledge 1881
Trustees of the British Museum

Frontispiece by Walter Crane
for *The Baby's Bouquet*, Routledge 1878
Trustees of the British Museum

'Sing a Song of Sixpence' by Harold Jones
for *Lavender's Blue*, Oxford University Press 1954
Private Collection

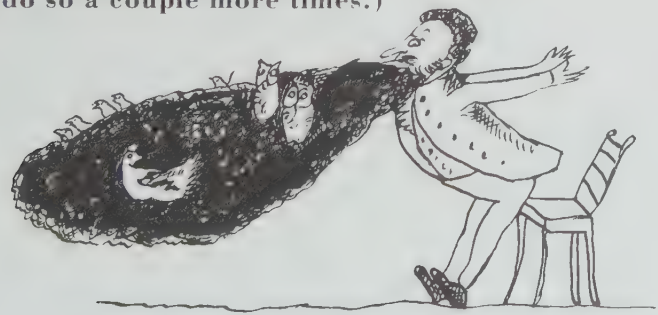
2

How pleasant to know Mr Lear
He's written some limericks, I hear.
Though his use of a word
Might be labelled absurd
It is always a treat for the ear.

How pleasant to know Mr Lear
His poetry's funny, if queer,
And his drawings in pen
Are peculiar, but then,
They are always expressive and clear.

The other works shown in this section
Are quite an assorted selection.
But the Bunnies asleep
And Tim's trip on the deep
Are both worthy of closer inspection.

If you're writing a poem which chimes
With the rhythms of Mr Lear's rhymes
Take a tip, don't be proud,
Just recite it aloud
(And do so a couple more times.)



There was an Old Man with a beard, who said, "It is just as I feared
Two Owls and a Hen, four Larks and a Wren,
Have all built their nests in my beard!

2: THE ARTIST AS AUTHOR

In some books illustrated by the author, the pictures are as important as the words, for example in Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies*, and in Edward Lear's *A Book of Nonsense*.

Sometimes more of the story can be 'read' in the pictures than in the words, as in *Rosie's Walk* by Pat Hutchins, where only the hen is mentioned in the text, never the fox who is chasing her.

Most of the books in this section were created by people who were primarily artists, but who were also good at telling stories. Often these stories and rhymes were invented for particular children. Edward Lear, well-known as a watercolourist, was asked to make drawings of the animals in the Earl of Derby's private zoo. While staying at the Earl's house, Lear made friends with the children there and entertained them with comic drawings and limericks. These were published much later as *A Book of Nonsense*.

Similarly, *The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies* originated as a picture-story letter with pen and ink drawings, which Beatrix Potter sent to a friend's daughter, and years later rewrote for publication with watercolour illustrations.

previous page
'There was an Old Man with a beard' by Edward Lear
for *A Book of Nonsense*, Routledge 1861
Chris Beetles Ltd, London

'Mrs Flopsy Bunny looked suspiciously at the sack' by Beatrix Potter for *The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies*, Warne 1909

Trustees of the British Museum

'Rosie the Hen went for a walk' by Pat Hutchins
for *Rosie's Walk*, Bodley Head 1970

Pat Hutchins

'Off with her head' by John Tenniel
for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll
Macmillan 1866

Macmillan Publishers Limited

THREE

ALICE looked round, and saw a great procession of soldiers and courtiers and royal children and guests, including her friend the White Rabbit, and last of all she saw the King and Queen of Hearts.

'Do you play croquet?' demanded the Queen severely. 'Oh yes,' said Alice, and added 'if it please your Majesty.' Alice was not sure she liked the Queen's tone of voice, but she thought she had better be polite. 'But can one play croquet in black and white?' she asked, surprised at her own courage.

'Black and white!?' said the Queen, tossing her head impatiently. 'What is the girl talking about?' and before Alice's astonished eyes the Queen turned crimson with fury. 'Off with her head!' she screamed. 'Nonsense!' said Alice, very loudly, and she turned to walk away but bumped straight into some soldiers who immediately fell face down on the ground in a heap for all the world like a pack of cards. 'Oh dear,' thought Alice to herself, and she wondered very much what would happen next.

'It's—it's a very fine day!' said the White Rabbit, who was standing at her side and looking anxiously into her face. 'It's rude to stare,' said Alice. 'I'm most awfully sorry,' said the Rabbit, 'but you see you've changed so,' and before Alice could say another word he disappeared down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge. 'I wonder what he can be thinking of, I haven't changed a bit. Or have I?' and she wandered off in search of a looking-glass to see what all the fuss was about.

3: THE AUTHOR & THE ILLUSTRATOR

There is no set pattern for the way partnerships between writers and illustrators work. Sometimes a writer might invite an artist to illustrate his or her story, as happened with *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, but often the choice of illustrator is left to the publisher, as with *The Mousehole Cat* by Antonia Barber, illustrated by Nicola Bayley.

Alan Garner, the author of *The Stone Book Quartet*, wanted etchings to illustrate his story and the publisher commissioned Michael Foreman. When Garner saw Foreman's roughly-textured etchings, he remarked: 'It's as if the artist had taken the back off my head and seen straight into my brain.'

The original story told by Charles Dodgson to ten-year-old Alice Liddell was called *Alice's Adventures Underground*. It was written out by hand and illustrated by the author as a present for Alice. Dodgson wanted to publish the expanded version of this story with his own illustrations, but he eventually chose a professional artist whose drawing he admired. In 1865, Dodgson published *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* under his pen-name 'Lewis Carroll', with wood engravings by John Tenniel. Dodgson was very fussy about every detail of the illustrations, but Tenniel retaliated by refusing to illustrate a chapter about 'a wasp in a wig' which Dodgson had to leave out.

In 1988, more than 120 years after *Alice* was first published, Anthony Browne illustrated Dodgson's text in colour, referring back to Tenniel's original black and white illustrations. Browne's watercolour pictures are full of witty, surreal detail that give an extra dream-like dimension to the story.

'Off with her head!' by Anthony Browne
for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll
Julia MacRae 1988

Anthony Browne

'Most pickers left their stones on the dump' by Michael Foreman for *The Stone Book Quartet* by Alan Garner, Collins 1976

Michael Foreman

'The Great Storm-Cat lay in wait' by Nicola Bayley
for *The Mousehole Cat* by Antonia Barber, Walker Books 1990

Nicola Bayley

'I am sure he must be Long John' by Ralph Steadman
for *Treasure Island* by R. L. Stevenson, Harrap 1985

Ralph Steadman

Four

WHEN THE HISPANIOLA BROUGHT US HOME to England, we left behind seventeen men dead and three living souls marooned on that accursed island. Behind us also, in a port in Spanish America, we left my friend and enemy John Silver, and none of us sorry to see him go. But in my heart I knew I had not heard the last of him, and I was right.

¶ This morning, early, Squire Trelawney came to see me, accompanied by an artist who asked me to describe Long John so that he could draw his face and figure on a poster, with a reward for his arrest. It seems the old rogue was wanted for crimes other than those he perpetrated on Treasure Island.

¶ I thought back to my first encounter with the old sea-cook, at the Spyglass Inn in Bristol, and I remembered Billy Bones' description of the 'sea-farin' man with one leg who struck terror into the heart of even that old pirate. The images were so different they could have been of different men.

¶ 'I described the blighter myself, of course,' said the Squire 'but the Doctor noticed that I had forgotten to mention Silver's wooden leg. To tell the truth, lad, he said that my description would have fitted half the men in England, aye and Scotland too!' The Squire cleared his throat and looked embarrassed. 'So here we are, Jim. You knew him better than any of us. You have an excellent memory and a splendid way with words. Out with it, old chap, what did John Silver really look like?'

4: REINTERPRETATIONS

Fantasies like *Alice* and adventure stories like *Treasure Island*, which have always been popular, have been interpreted in many different ways, by successive generations of artists.

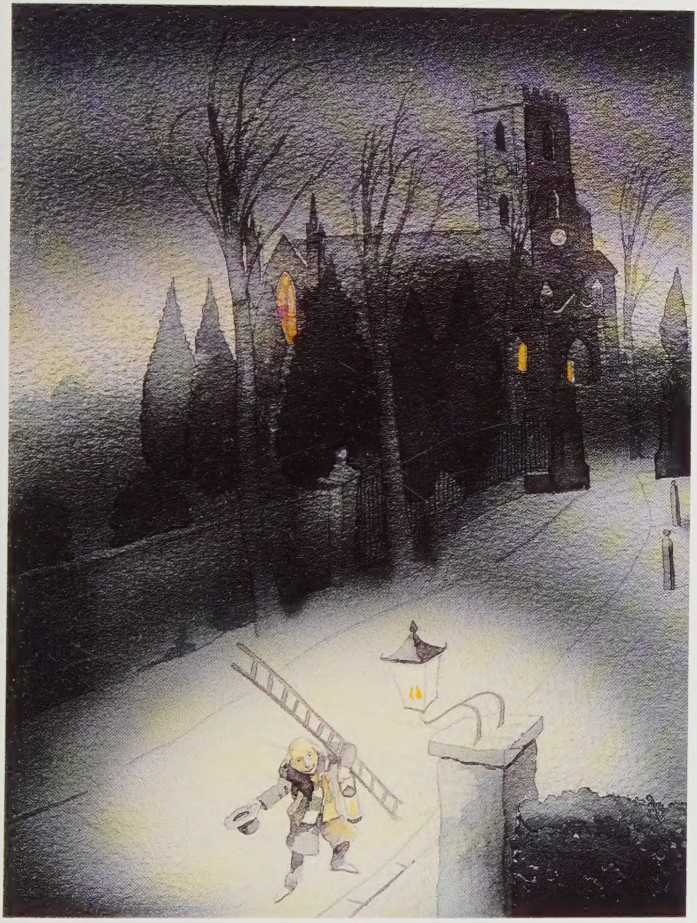
When *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson was first published as a book in 1883, it had only one illustration – a map. Of the many illustrated editions which followed, Mervyn Peake's menacing pen-and-ink drawings and Ralph Steadman's disturbing watercolours capture most effectively the story's dark violence. Stevenson's book about his boyhood in Edinburgh, *A Child's Garden of Verses*, has also been illustrated in many different styles by artists as varied as Joan Hassall, Brian Wildsmith and Michael Foreman.

Cinderella or the Glass Slipper was one of a collection of folk tales from France that was first written down by Charles Perrault at the end of the seventeenth century. Probably the most popular of all fairy stories, it has since appeared in numerous versions. George Cruikshank illustrated and rewrote the story in 1854, as a temperance tract, in which all alcoholic drink is destroyed at Cinderella's wedding. Arthur Rackham's silhouettes decorated a version retold by C. S. Evans in 1919, and *Rashie-Coat*, a Scottish variant of *Cinderella*, was published in the style of a chapbook in 1951 with wood engravings by Joan Hassall. Walt Disney's animated film of 1950 was later issued in book form. In complete contrast Roald Dahl's *Revolting Rhymes*, with illustrations by Quentin Blake, is a hilarious send-up of fairy stories.

'Ah, Bill, Bill, we have seen a sight of times us two' by Mervyn Peake for *Treasure Island* by R. L. Stevenson, Eyre & Spottiswoode 1949

Chris Beetles Ltd, London

'The Lamplighter' by Brian Wildsmith
for *A Child's Garden of Verses* by R. L. Stevenson, O.U.P. 1966
Brian Wildsmith



'The Lamplighter' by Michael Foreman
for *A Child's Garden of Verses* by R. L. Stevenson, Gollancz 1985
Michael Foreman

SO Cinderella married the Prince and moved into the palace to live happily ever after.

♔ *But this was not the end of the story, it was really just the beginning. Cinderella's new home was large and splendid, and she liked it very much indeed. Her special place was the Picture Gallery. There were paintings of people wearing beautiful costumes. There were paintings of horses and cows and dogs and all sorts of other creatures. But the paintings she liked the best were the ones which told stories.*

♔ *Of course the Picture Gallery was popular with other people too, and there were times when it was full. But it didn't matter to Cinderella who else was there, it was still her favourite place.*

♔ *For Cinderella, a visit to the Picture Gallery was like walking into a fairy-tale.*

♔ *The End*

JACKET ILLUSTRATIONS

Front: 'Cinderella' by Quentin Blake for *Revolting Rhymes* by Roald Dahl, Jonathan Cape 1982 (Quentin Blake)
Back: 'Cinderella and the Ugly Sisters' by Annie French c.1900 (National Galleries of Scotland)
Flaps: illustrations by Arthur Rackham for *Cinderella* retold by C. S. Evans, Heinemann 1919 (Chris Beetles Ltd, London)

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